INTL 6010: Research Methods in International Policy
University of Georgia, Department of International Affairs

Course Instructor Information
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Course Meeting Information
Fall 2023
Tuesdays, 11:10am-2:00pm
219 Peabody Hall
https://www.elc.uga.edu

Course Description
Policy analysts consume and produce knowledge. Excelling at such tasks requires the analyst to know some fundamental principles of "good" policy research. On the consumer side, how do we evaluate claims about the efficacy of policies, as well as the evidence used to support those claims? On the production side, how do we generate a tractable question to investigate, and how do we design a study to answer that question competently? With respect to the latter, for example, how do we make an argument and generate a hypothesis from it? How do we gather the appropriate data—whether quantitative or qualitative or both—to evaluate the hypothesis? How do we entertain the possibility that our hypothesis is incorrect? How do we present our results convincingly—in writing or visually—and how do we adjust that presentation for the audience receiving our results? More broadly, how do we approach existing research, as well as our own, skeptically?

This course addresses the above questions by mixing two, interrelated perspectives: that of policy analysts and that of social scientists. Its structure highlights the various steps in the non-linear research process. Along the way, it also considers best practices in, pitfalls researchers encounter during, and common errors researchers make within the research process. Students apply these various insights to a long-term, collaborative, policy-relevant research project—a project that prepares them not only for upper-level courses, but for their individual capstone project as well.

Course Objectives
At the conclusion of this course, students should be (better) able to:

- Generate policy-relevant research questions to study
- Consume existing policy research, scholarly research, and news stories skeptically (e.g., identifying unsubstantiated theoretical or empirical claims, or noting shortcomings)
- Synthesize existing research—and marshal it in support of an argument
- Make a theoretical argument, which includes conceptualizing key terms, elaborating assumptions, outlining the argument's logic, and deriving hypotheses
- Determine the data needed to evaluate an argument, being mindful of any limitations of either the selected approach or the data itself
- Generate and explain descriptive statistics
- Present an argument (and/or evidence) concisely, adjusting the presentation for the audience at hand
- Collaborate with peers on a long-term policy-based project
- Write more concisely—and edit their own and others' work
- Understand the general components and process they need to complete their capstone project

Course Reading Material
The required textbooks for this course are:

- Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research,* 3rd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pherson, Katherine H., and Randolph H. Pherson. 2021. *Critical Thinking for Intelligence Analysts*, 3rd edn. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

A copy of each required textbook is on reserve at the main library (for 2-hour, in-library use), although students may wish to purchase their own copy. The remaining readings will come from two sources: academic journals and various book chapters. The instructor will make all required readings—other than the books listed above—available electronically through the course's eLearning Commons (eLC) website (log-in using UGA MyID and SSO at: https://uga.view.usg.edu/). If you do not find something on the course website, please access the material through the University of Georgia Library system and notify the instructor.

Course Requirements
The requirements for this course, and the percentage that each contributes to the final grade, are:

1. *Participation* (20%). A career in policy will require your thoughtful, productive participation, and we will therefore practice this skill during the course. Every student should complete the required readings for a class session before that session begins. During the session, students should then thoughtfully and productively contribute to the session's discussion and activities. After each session, the instructor will assign the student a participation score for that day, taking into account the frequency and quality of the student's contributions. The score employs the following scale:
    - 5 points: The student made an extremely strong contribution. Comments were thoughtful, constructive, appropriately critical, and synthesized material (within/across weeks).
    - 3-4 points: The student meaningfully contributed. Comments did not merely repeat the assigned material, and they demonstrated insights (i.e., made connections/extensions).
    - 2 points: The student did not meaningfully contribute. Comments were inaccurate or largely repeated the message of the assigned material, rather than demonstrating insights.
    - 1 points: The student did not speak.
    - 0 points: The student did not attend.

2. *Scholarly Discussion Lead* (10% each; 20% total). Each student will select two scholarly readings for which they will lead discussion. By noon on the day before the class meeting that will discuss the selected reading, the student will email a set of discussion questions to their peers and the instructor. These questions may concern a reading's substance, method, and/or evidence—and should aim to generate discussion (i.e., minimize simple reading comprehension questions). To get you brainstorming, think about questions such as:
    - What question motives the research?
    - What is the researcher's goal (e.g., explanation, prediction, and so on)?
    - What is the theoretical argument? Is it logical and compelling?
    - Does the researcher adequately develop key concepts?
    - What are the theory's observable (or testable) implications?
    - What data does the researcher use? What is the unit of analysis? Are the data appropriate?
    - Does the measurement of concepts adequately align with the theoretical argument?
    - What is the research method that the researcher uses?
    - Are the researcher's conclusions adequately supported?
    - What might researchers study next within this line of inquiry?

3. *Policy Discussion Lead* (5% each; 10% total). Each student will select two days on which to lead discussion about a media story or policy paper of their choice. By noon on the day before the selected class meeting, the student will email the story/paper to their peers and the instructor. In class, they will then lead their peers through a critique of the major claims made and information presented in the story/paper. The discussion can follow the student's preferred format, but should at least include:
    - What are the major claims or inferences?
    - What information (or data) does the writer use to justify these claims/inferences?
    - What additional information (or data) do we need to validate the claims/inferences?
    - What potential problems exist with the information/data as presented?
    - What information/data would change the claims/inferences?

4. *Collaborative Research Project* (20% process, as divided below; 25% final written product; 5% final oral presentation; 50% total). Research often involves collaboration. To work on this skill—and to better prepare students to undertake their individual capstone project later in the degree program—students will complete a collaborative research design project over the academic term. This project contains the following components:
    - The instructor will assign students to a collaborative research group of up to five students total. This will occur in class on **August 22**.
    - *Research Question* (2%): A single sentence that identifies a dependent and independent variable, formulated as a question for study. This is due **August 29**. (Note: The precise question wording will/can change throughout the term.)
    - *Literature Review* (5%): A 3-5 page focused synthesis of existing knowledge on the question the team plans to study. This is due **September 12**.
    - *Theoretical Argument* (5%): A 3-5 page argument that (i) lists any starting assumptions, (ii) provides a step-by-step logical connection between the independent and dependent variables, and (iii) generates at least one hypothesis to evaluate empirically. This is due **October 10**.
    - *Research Design* (5%): A 2-4 page strategy for evaluating the hypothesis with evidence, which includes (i) temporal and spatial scope, (ii) unit of analysis, (iii) potential data, (iv) measurement of variables, and (v) method. This is due **November 7**.
    - *Peer Feedback* (3%): Teams will circulate a full working draft of their project by **November 7**. Each team will then provide detailed feedback to every other team. All feedback is due by **November 21**.
    - *Final Project* (25%): The final written version of the team project is due by **November 28**. This document will contain an introduction, literature review, theoretical argument, and research design. It may also—but need not—contain preliminary results (depending on the team's progress).
    - *Project Presentation* (5%): A presentation of the team's final project will occur on **November 28**.
    - *Meetings with Instructor*: Each team should plan to meet with the instructor at least three times during the semester—once **before September 12**, once **between September 12-October 10**, and once between **October 10-November 14**. Teams can set these meetings via the instructor's office hour scheduler or by contacting the instructor directly.
    - *Group Contribution Feedback*: The instructor will ask each team member to evaluate the other team members' contributions to the group project. In the event that a team member does not contribute meaningfully to the final product (or its various components), the instructor may adjust the individual team members' grade accordingly. This is due by **November 28**.

Grade Distribution

A	93.00-100.00	C	73.00-76.99
A-	90.00-92.99	C-	70.00-72.99
B+	87.00-89.99	D	60.00-69.99
B	83.00-86.99	F	Below 60.00
B-	80.00-82.99		
C+	77.00-79.99		

Course Policies

1. *Respectful Learning Environment.* All participants in the course will treat one another—as well as their ideas and comments—with respect. It is normal to make mistakes with difficult material, as well as to disagree in an academic setting. This disagreement, however, will occur respectfully in our class discussions. Towards the goal of creating a respectful, inclusive classroom environment, students are expected to: (i) use language that does not insult others or their point of view, (ii) keep cell phones *turned off and put away* during our class meetings, and (iii) use laptops for educational purposes *only*. Any student that does not follow these guidelines may be asked to leave the classroom and/or remove the distracting technology.

2. *Course Material Copyright/Recording Policy.* The course material—including (but not limited to) all documents provided in the eLC course website, quizzes, graded assignments, handouts, and in-class lectures—are copyrighted. Students may therefore ***not*** record lectures (audio or video), distribute course materials, or post any content from the course online *without the instructor's express, written permission.* For the sake of student privacy, students may also not record our class sessions or meetings (audio or video). Exceptions will be made automatically for those registered with the Disability Resource Center and who, through it, require an accommodation to record course meetings. Those students, however, agree not to distribute the recordings (including online) *and* to destroy the recordings immediately after the course concludes.

3. *Attendance.* Class attendance is required for this course, particularly because some activities cannot be replicated (e.g., our discussions or in-class labs/exercises).

4. *Missing Class.* Students who are unable to attend a class meeting will not receive participation points for that meeting, and are responsible for obtaining the notes for that meeting from another student.

5. *Assignment Grade Appeal.* If a student believes that they received an inaccurate grade, they may submit a written memo to the instructor, along with the graded assignment in question. The student should explain in detail in the memo why the student believes the grade should be different and must submit the memo within two weeks of receiving the graded assignment. The instructor will then read the memo, re-read the assignment, and issue a new grade. The new grade may be lower, equal to, or higher than the original grade and will not be subject to additional appeal under this policy.

6. *Academic Honesty.* As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to follow the University's academic honesty policy ("A Culture of Honesty") and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty," including policies that cover plagiarism and unauthorized assistance. Students are responsible for informing themselves about these standards before performing and submitting any academic work. They may direct specific questions they have regarding the policy—or its application to course assignments—to the instructor. Please note that all suspected violations of this policy will be handled according to the guidelines set forth within the policy.

7. *Artificial Intelligence Tools.* Students may not use word-mixing or artificial intelligence-based software, such as ChatGPT, to generate any part of the assignments required in this course. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in a zero on the assignment in question and/or a failing grade in the course.

8. *Accommodations.* The University of Georgia strives to create an inclusive learning environment. Students that require a potential accommodation (i) must register with the Disability Resource Center on campus (706-542-8719, http://www.drc.uga.edu), and (ii) should discuss the accommodation with the instructor at the outset of the course.

9. *Exceptions and Modifications to Policies.* Any exceptions or modifications to the above rules (or more broadly, the syllabus) are given at the instructor's discretion, but only with *prior approval* and only under *extenuating* circumstances. Any exception/modification requires appropriate documentation from the student. (Note: In the case of illness, "appropriate documentation" means a doctor's note indicating an illness, rather than a medical visit verification form. Please schedule routine medical visits around the course schedule.)

Course Schedule

The general schedule for the course appears below. The instructor may announce deviations to this schedule as necessary. Students should complete readings/assignments for a class session *before* that class session begins. Please note that for readings, K/W refers to the Kellstedt & Whitten required text, and P/P refers to the Pherson & Pherson required text.

Unit	*Week*	*Date*	*Topic*	*Assigned reading (complete before this class starts)*	*In class (lab)*	*Team Assignments due (before this class starts)*
Introduction	1	Aug 22	Identifying questions	• K/W, Ch.1 • P/P, Ch. 1-3 & 6 • *Analyst's Style Manual,* pp. 33-37	• Introductions • Course overview • Determining audience • Team creation	• None
Research	2	Aug 29	Finding & integrating research	• Baglione, Ch. 4 • P/P, Ch. 8-10 • Seymour and Cunningham (2023) • Kobayashi (2017)	• Using library and web resources • Assessing source reliability • Practice integrating research into a narrative	• Research question
Argument	3	Sep 5	Concepts	• Goertz (2020), Ch. 2-3 • Schneider & Wagemann, Ch. 2-3 • Blair et al. (2023) • Lai & Slater (2006)	• Grey zones • Hybrid concepts • Typologies • Necessary and sufficient conditions • Developing concepts theoretically	• None
	4	Sep 12	Assumptions and scope	• Mintz et al., Ch. 3 & 5 • P/P, Ch. 11-12 • Goertz (2018), Ch. 8 • Larsen (2023)	• Identifying/specifying assumptions and scope parameters and • "Evaluating" assumptions	• Literature review • Instructor meeting #1
	5	Sep 19	Models	• K/W, Ch. 2-3 • P/P, Ch. 4-5 & 7 • Goertz & Mahoney (2005)	• Specifying theoretical models • Drawing theoretical models	• None

	6	Sep 26	Formal models	• Dixit et al., Ch. 2-3 • Wolford, Ch. 2 • Ganon et al. (2023) • Kostyuk & Gartzke (2023)	• Foundational concepts behind formal models • How to set up (simple) decision trees	• None
	7	Oct 3	Hypotheses	• P/P, Ch. 13-16 • Owsiak & Vasquez (2021) • Goldfien et al. (2023)	• Developing hypotheses from theoretical models • Generating alternative hypotheses	• None
Research design	8	Oct 10	Aligning data with argument	• K/W, Ch. 4-6 • Mousseau (2009) • Becker et al. (2023) • Suh (2023)	• How to match data measures/indicators with theoretical concepts	• Theoretical argument • Instructor meeting #2
	9	Oct 17	Qualitative	• Bennett (2010) • Mahoney (2012) • Seawright & Gerring (2008) • Ross (2004) • Evangelista (2014)	• Selecting cases • Process tracing • Counterfactual reasoning	• None
	10	Oct 24	Quantitative: Description	• K/W, Ch. 7-8 • P/P, Ch. 17 • Gerring (2012) • Schenoni et al. (2020) • Owsiak & Vasquez (2019)	• Evaluating claims descriptively • Thinking probabilistically • Probability vs. possibility • Conditional probability	• None
	11	Oct 31	Lab: Data Literacy & Self Editing	• None	• Data lab • Editing lab	• None
	12	Nov 7	Quantitative II: Modeling	• K/W, Ch. 9-12 • Gibler & Owsiak (2018) • Jackson et al. (2022) • Mitchell (2020)	• Reading statistical models	• Research design • Circulate full working draft
	13	Nov 14	Common issues	• Geddes, Ch. 3 • *AJIL Unbound* (2021), 115:368-403. • Mitchell & Owsiak (2023)	• How to be skeptical of data and data analysis	• Instructor meeting #3

Presenting results	14	Nov 21		• P/P, Ch. 18-20 • Goldring & Matthews (2023) • Uzonyi & Reeder (2023)	• Presenting results to various audiences • Data visualization • Simplifying the message	• Peer feedback
Conclusion	15	Nov 28		• None	• Presentation of team projects	• Final written project • Oral presentation • Assessment of team members' contributions